

Neighborhood Business District Strategy Public Comments from Two Public Forums September 2004

Comments from Sept. 29 Forum

- Windows that are effectively a wall; i.e., windows with posters or are not really transparent into the space.
- False entrance. Example of Safeway with a fake entrance that can't be used.
- Keep in mind the functionality of the businesses, too.
- Small businesses bare the brunt of transparency requirements – they want it but national chains don't play by the rules.
- What effect will setbacks have – especially since parking won't be there.
- How will conflicts with neighborhood plans be handled? Specific analysis will need to be done.
- Extending pedestrian zone elements – limiting driveways. What does this mean – to what extent?
- What about alley – sometimes they are good – sometimes bad. But they play a key role in those districts. How will the code address them?
- Can alleys be included in some of these requirements to make the alley more visible by more uses; i.e., pedestrians.
- How do we encourage individual entrepreneurs in our business districts? Size is important. Individual entrances. Want smaller to medium-sized spaces. Spaces too large will encourage chains and, therefore, sameness.
- Need to be creative with reuse of older spaces. In Fremont, we expanded the number of small spaces. New buildings will be too expensive for small businesses anyway. Shared use parking was also key to those small businesses.
- We've been talking about mixed-use business districts. There are some districts out there that are single-story commercial area surrounded by single family residential.
- When will the new regulations be put in place?

- Incentives for social or environmental designs? Are there any in this proposal? Will these changes allow developers and neighborhoods to experiment with new ideas and processes?
- Need to tailor what we are doing with neighborhood plans and specific neighborhood needs.
- Make sure web format is compatible with most users; i.e., 8.5 x 11 format.
- Surveys done this summer – please make that information available to neighborhood plan steward groups.
- Enforcement? Safeway on 15th put it onto the street – but they effectively just put the back of the building on the street. Now neighborhood doesn't like. If you set up regulations, make the building/developer abide by the regulations.
- Design Review (DR) distinction has been eliminated. It did allow flexibility previously. Need to address whether this is the case and make sure that all of the things DR allowed.
- Addition of lodging in NCI NC2 – how were the square feet determined?
- Parking is the number one issue in neighborhoods. This parking proposal could cause problems. Feels that market won't provide – then City will have to build parking.
- How about funding incentives to accomplish goals? If goal is to strengthen business district, what is being done to expand area so have core development vs. strip configuration? What can be done to encourage and protect individual entrepreneurs vs. chains? How can business district survive new development?
- I think 10 percent (residential amenity requirement) is too drastic. Whenever I visit the east coast, I'm always relieved to come home where there seems to be a livable amount of open space/residential amenities. Considering a gym "open space" will not encourage families to live in our neighborhood commercial districts. Go back to 20/15 percent minimum and weigh the tradeoffs carefully.
- Design reviews always ask how the development will impact nearby residential – but never seem to ask how it will positively impact the adjacent business district – seems unbalanced.
- Lot line to lot line is no good – leave more space by the sidewalk.
- Off-site and amenities are unenforceable – DPD is already failing to enforce other off-site requirements.
- Bring back the 80/80 percent rule to limit bulk. Use design review to develop creative solutions, if they are?

- Don't depart from the neighborhood plans; honor them. If a neighborhood wants these changes, more power to them. But don't force changes that are cookie-cutter and not tailored to the business district's character.
- The bias against ground-level housing is mentioned right up front in the report, but doesn't seem to be addressed here.
- I.A.2 limit multipurpose to I.O.O.K. No Walmart.
- "Market demand controls parking." Currently, not enough parking – your statement demands no construction without provided parking.
- Parking requirement reduction is not wanted by many neighborhoods and will kill many small businesses.
- Doesn't appear to address the opportunity for using developing alleys.
- Proposed P extensions mostly seem to be linear – do more to extend sideways where feasible (i.e., village, not pedestrian strip mall).
- Most of your proposed additional uses do NOT strengthen a business district – need to protect retail areas that depend on pedestrian traffic, especially when you limit parking requirements.
- I totally agree with the above statement.
- Watch that a set height for retail (13') doesn't push the building above the height limit on a sloped site.
- The architecture firms designing these new urban centers are still precluded from locating in these urban centers!
- Pedestrian street. #123 Good. #4 Good start. Need to address corners.
- For item #1: Not one person at all the monorail station area planning sessions has said "reduce parking." Can't wait for you to bring this to the SAP meetings in West Seattle.
- For item #2: Make sure just for non-residential. In the Madison Park area, we are already short of adequate parking spaces. You are allowing increased commercial development (2nd story additions) and you require no additional parking. People will not ride a bus to get to our area to shop. Elderly often can't walk.
- #3 Provide bicycle parking someplace other than sidewalks in front of businesses. Or at least require sidewalk widths that can accommodate bikes and pedestrians at same time.

- #1 Please check out research regarding parking availability effect on retail sales. See MainStreet, ULI or Shopping Center Association. Businesses in junction see their sales to up or down depending on parking. U Village credits improved business to new parking facility.
- Allow more parking entrances off of alleys so street stays more pedestrian friendly.
- #1 This is a killer, particularly for small retail. Good intention that ignores reality.
- #1 Skeptical about reduced parking – more out there not served. In some neighborhoods (First Hill), not all residents can get resident parking passes.
- Are you proposing to continue or increase the allowance of parking requirements to be met offsite? Offsite parking is not working. People are not choosing to park offsite but rather to jam up on-street parking places. Frequently the parking utilization is over 100%, as people park at fire hydrants, across driveways, near corners, and on planting strips and lawns – all illegal, and often dangerous.
- Off-site parking is also not being enforced. Once DPD allows off-site parking, it often goes away. It may be rented to other parking uses, or be built upon. Don't even consider continuing or expanding off-site parking until the enforcement system is overhauled.

Comments from Sept. 30 Forum

- We support the recommendations! Suzanne Carlson, Transportation Choices Coalition
- How did you choose the neighborhoods? What are the next neighborhoods? How are you working with Sound Transit?
- Don't lower open space – keep as bargaining chip through design review. Mean to apply pedestrian use requirements in all NC areas? More flexibility for housing within business districts. Need housing close in to district.
- Parking strategy misguided. Housing growth has come with business decline.
- You're essentially rezoning.
- Need SDOT cooperation – crosswalks, lights, etc.
- Residential remodel created blank wall.
- Support waiving parking – tenants are renting parking.

- Where do parking reductions apply?
- Location of parking – off-site allowed? For residential?
- Expand parking maximum from downtown to other areas.
- What's going to determine bicycle parking requirements?
- Location of off-site use triggers prohibition of off-site parking. Allow to go across zones.
- Have you had a meeting in Beacon Hill?
- Reductions in parking requirements go hand-in-hand with bus improvements. How are you working with METRO?